

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
BACKGROUND - SOUTH VIETNAM

STATUS OF DEFENSE MINISTER MINH

I. Ho Thong Minh was chosen by Diem for post of defense minister largely on grounds Minh could "get along" with sects.

A. Perhaps "got along" too well. When Diem "ordered" Minh and Army to boot Binh Xuyen out of National Police HQ (order given 29 Mar; later countermanded at French and US insistence), Minh tendered resignation rather than comply.

B. After incident on night 30 Mar, dissident's communique (in name United Front Nationalist Forces) claimed Minh had resigned because he disapproved Diem's "high treason."

II. Minh apparently out, although whether or not for good is unclear. *Collins 1. per letter*

A. Both US and French pressuring Diem to reaffirm Minh as defense minister.